

United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

Royal Gorge Field Office

3028 E. Main Street

Cañon City, CO 81212

Public Scoping/Comment on Draft Alternatives

Salida East R&PP Lease and Management

September, 2016



IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

PROJECT TITLE: Salida East R&PP Lease and Management

PLANNING UNIT: Salida

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: New Mexico PM; T49N, R9E Section 10 (see map)

APPLICANT/PROPONENT: Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Bureau of Land Management

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

This document is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to solicit public input on proposed federal actions outlined in this document. The first section is intended to inform the readers about the history of the area and issues leading up to the purpose of the document as well as the need for the proposed actions. ~~arises from~~. The next section identifies a range of alternatives that were developed through internal discussions as well as public input received through the Notice of Realty Action public input process.

Input is being solicited on the draft alternatives and issues that should be considered in the environmental review process. Based on this input the alternatives can be modified and a draft environmental assessment will be prepared. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft environmental assessment before it is finalized.

Background

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) was created in 1989 with the passage of Colorado State House Bill 1253 in response to public demand for increased management along the Arkansas River. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Colorado State Parks [now Colorado Parks and Wildlife] (CPW) worked together to develop the first management plan in 1989 which was revised in 2001 and is currently undergoing its second revision. Through this planning guidance facilities were developed throughout the river corridor to facilitate recreation use. The facilities at Salida East were installed in May of 2008.

The Arkansas River Recreation Management Plan clearly notes that in order for recreation management on the river to be successful, fees for developed facilities would be essential to support the initial cost and provide on-going maintenance. The management plan also recognized that a mechanism was needed to give the State of Colorado assurance that their investment in facilities was secure and that ongoing maintenance and management would be

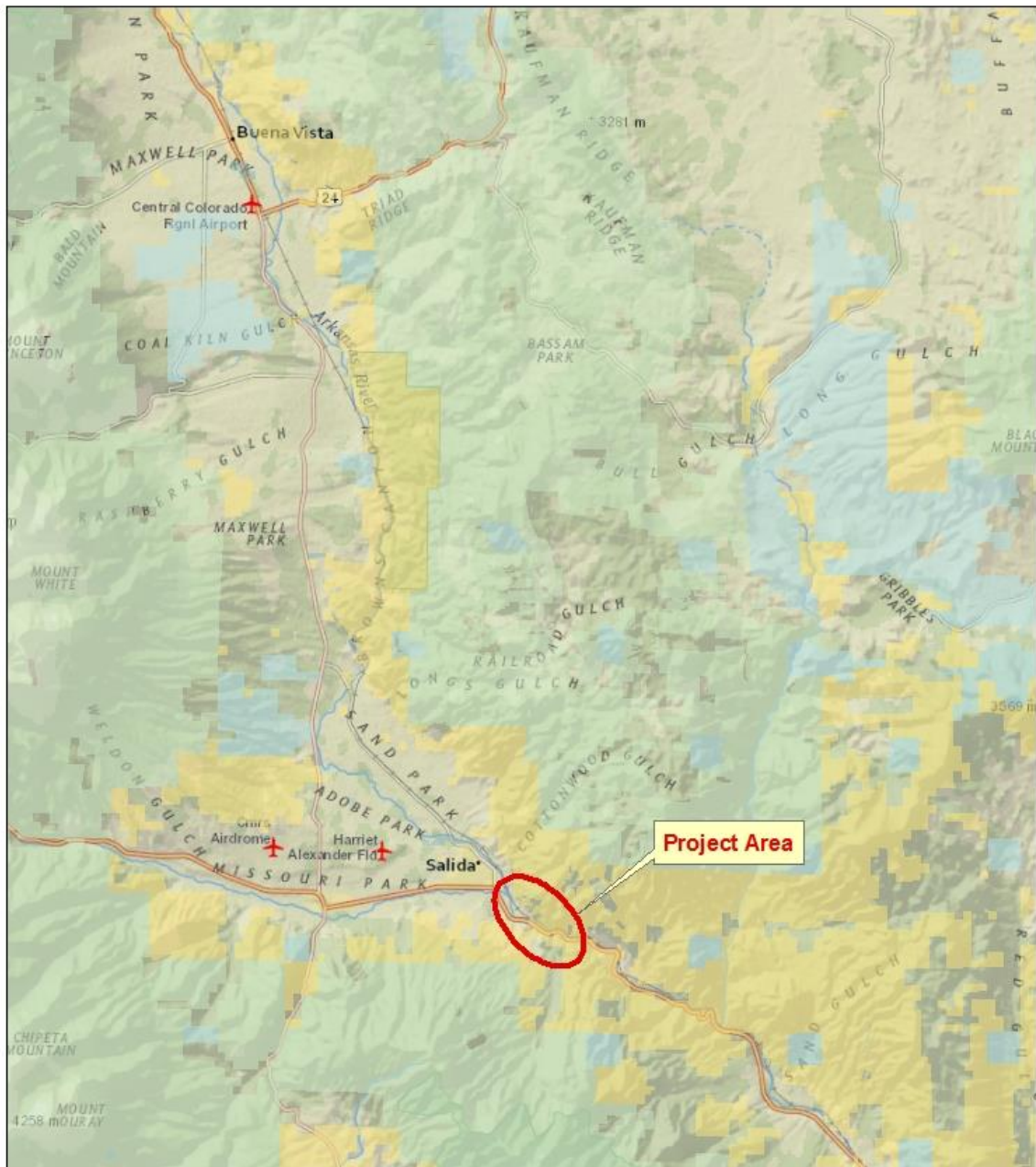
provided. The mechanism identified is leasing BLM lands to the State through a Recreation and Public Purpose Lease (R&PP). Under these arrangements lands remain public lands and under the control and jurisdiction and control of the BLM but are developed and managed by CPW. While R&PP lands may be disposed of by patent there is no desire by CPW or the BLM to go to patent. Starting in 1990, this strategy has been employed throughout the river corridor with great success and includes 13 developed recreation sites such as Hecla Junction, Ruby Mountain and Five Points. An R&PP lease requires that funds collected go back into the site ensuring that facilities will be cared for in the long term.

As identified above, the facilities at Salida East, including a road, boat ramp, parking lot, restroom/change facility, and fire rings, were installed in 2008. Even though the management plan directs that the site be leased to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, this has yet to occur and this recreation site remains BLM land without a lease to the State. In recent years the site has seen dramatic increases in use. The majority of this use is associated with unregulated camping. Since a fee is not being charged and sites are not regulated or established, the area is often over capacity and new sites are regularly created leading to vegetation loss and impacts to soils. The free nature of the site and its close proximity to the community of Salida has led to an increase in illegal activity resulting in an unsafe situation for other users of the site and AHRA and BLM maintenance and law enforcement staff. The illegal activity combined with the increase in use of facilities have led to dramatic increases in costs to AHRA for facilities maintenance and providing for public safety.

In 2014, CPW submitted an application to add the Salida East Recreation Site to its list of sites managed under an R&PP lease. The original application was for more acreage but existing mining claims limited the area that could be leased. In response to this application a Notice of Realty Action was published in the Federal Register. A public comment opportunity was provided through this Federal Register notice where a number of comments were received.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the document is to respond to Colorado Parks and Wildlife's application for an R&PP lease. It is also understood that changes in management at the site will likely change visitor use patterns creating the need to develop additional management strategies on adjacent BLM lands including the north side of the river. The management partners desire to address the ongoing issues at the site including impacts to resources from camping, the increase in illegal activity, the increased cost for facility maintenance and providing for public safety. The need for the action stems from compliance with Recreation and Purposes Act of 1954, 43 USC 869, the multiple use and sustainable yield mandate of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 Sec. 302 and the Withdrawal and Classification decisions of the Royal Gorge Resource Area Resource Management Plan of 1986.



Salida East-R&PP Lease and Management Plan September 2016

0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles



NOTE TO MAP USERS
No warrantee is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the data layers shown on this map. The official land records of the data providers should be checked or current status on any specific tract of land.

ALTERNATIVES

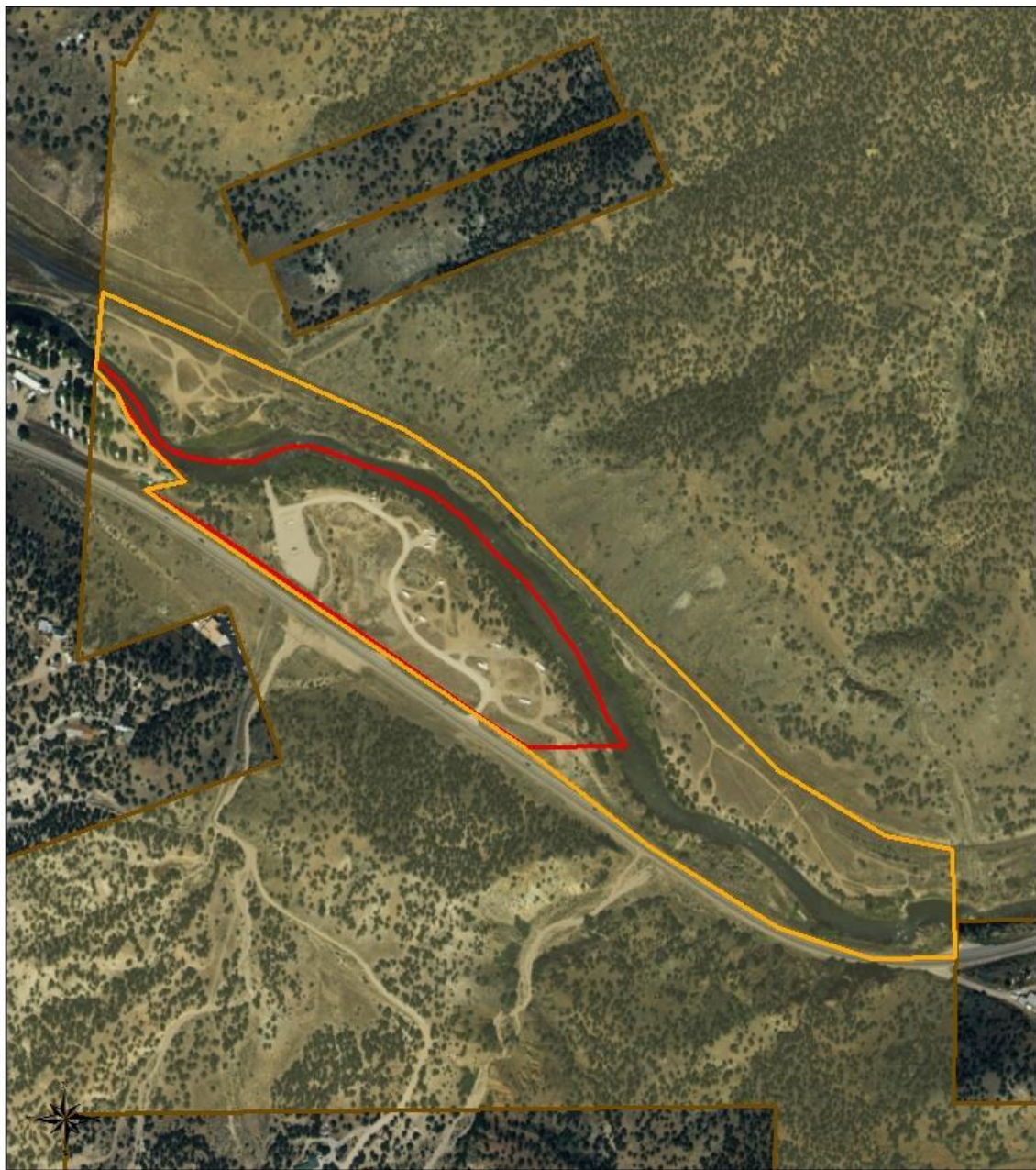
The first part of the process for an R&PP lease is a Notice of Realty Action through the Federal Register. This process reclassifies the lands as suitable to recreational purposes, segregates the minerals and also seeks public input on the suitability of designating the lands for recreational purposes. During this process a number of comments were received identifying a range of future desires for the site and issues associated with proposed management changes. These comments were used to develop a range of future development and management scenarios for the site.

Three Action Alternatives have been developed that fit within the purpose and need for the document. Policy also requires the agency to consider a no action alternative which is also included in this document.

Based on the purpose and need of the document, all of the action alternatives include leasing the site to Colorado Parks and Wildlife through an R&PP lease. The area of lease would not change by alternative (see map 2). Instead, the alternatives consider a range of development and facilities provided from higher end RV sites with water and power to minimal facilities and alterations to the site. CPW has a set fee structure based on the type of facilities provided as well as day-use fees for developed sites. Fees charged would match this fee structure and would begin to be collected upon finalization of the lease to CPW.

2016 Colorado Parks and Wildlife State Park Fee Structure

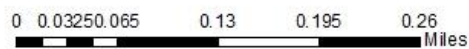
Pass Type	Cost
Recreation Area/Park Entrance	
Individual (walk-in)	\$3
Daily Parks Pass (vehicle)	\$7
Annual Pass	\$70
Annual Multiple (same address)	\$35
Aspen Leaf Annual (Colorado resident age 64 or older)	\$60
Aspen Leaf Multiple (same address)	\$30
Columbine Pass – annual (disabled Colorado resident)	\$14
Centennial Pass – annual (limited income Colorado resident)	\$14
Colorado Disabled Veterans License Plate (must be a DV plate)	Free
Volunteer Annual Pass (48 hours required)	Free
Camping Permits (Per Day Fee)	
Primitive Campsite	\$10
Basic Campsite	\$18
Electrical Campsite	\$24
Full Hookup Campsite	\$28



Legend

-  Planning Area
-  R&PP Lease Area
-  BLM Managed Lands

Salida East-R&PP Lease and Management Plan September 2016



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Alternative 1

Under this alternative the site would have the highest level of development within the proposed leased area. Within the leased area CPW would develop a high end campground providing primarily RV sites and some basic level sites. RV sites would provide fire rings, picnic tables, defined parking, water and electric. Basic sites would provide fire rings, picnic tables, leveled parking areas and tent pads. No primitive level sites would be provided under this alternative and adjacent BLM lands would be closed to camping. The roads within the site would be improved along with vehicle controls to better manage use. Additional restrooms would be installed to serve the campground area. The majority of the sites would be available through a reservation system, although there would also be a limited number of sites available on a first come first serve basis. This infrastructure would be developed and phased in over time as funding and infrastructure connectivity allows.

In addition to site developments there will be an increase in visitor safety services, monitoring, maintenance, and cleaning activities. Interpretive signing will be installed at the site and the informal trail system improved to support shore angling.

It is recognized that changes to the Salida East location will have direct effects on the public land on the north side of the river and management will be required. Between private land and railroad rights-of-ways it is uncertain that public access to the north side of the river in this area is legal at this time. Further research will be conducted and access pursued if warranted. A bridge from Salida East may be required to provide access to the north side of the river. Once access is secured to this area it would be managed for walk in day-use activities and limited designated/dispersed camping with limited vehicle access. Fire-pans and portable toilet systems would be required. If drive-in access is secured then fees would not be charged for use of this area at this point in time, but could be considered at a later date depending upon future management needs. If the only access to the north side of the river is through a bridge that originates within the lease area then day-use fees would apply.

Since the existing boat ramp would be included within the R&PP site day-use fees would apply for use of this facility. Comments suggested a public desire for continued free river access in this area for small vessels. Carry-in access would be researched and pursued under this alternative. Carry-in access may be constructed on BLM land on the north side of the river or through agreements with adjacent property owners on either the north or south side of the river.

Alternative 2

This alternative is similar to Alternative 1, but differs through the level of proposed development. Under this alternative there would be a wider range of sites from primitive level sites with few amenities, basic level sites similar to those found at other AHRA campgrounds, and a limited number of RV sites offering electric and water. Additional restrooms would be installed to serve the campground area. The sites would be a mix of reservation and first-come

first-serve. As with Alternative 1, the infrastructure would be developed over time as funding and infrastructure connectivity allows and fees would be charged upon finalization of the lease to CPW.

Under Alternative 2 a group picnic site would be developed and available for reservation. It would also serve as an overflow camping/group camping area during periods of high use associated with events such as FIBArk.

Camping in designated primitive sites on BLM lands outside of the lease area would be allowed. If accessed through the Salida East R&PP lease area via a bridge over the Arkansas River day-use fees would apply.

As in Alternative 1, under this alternative there will be an increase in visitor safety services, monitoring, maintenance, and cleaning activities. Interpretive signing will be installed at the site and the informal trail system improved to support shore angling.

Management on the north side of the river would be the same as Alternative 1 including investigating options for free river access that accommodates small vessels.

Alternative 3

Under this alternative camping within the site would be limited to designated primitive level sites with minimal facilities most closely resembling what is present today. All of the sites would be first-come/first-served with no reservations. The overall level of development of the site would be lower with vehicle and site controls limited to what is necessary to protect resources. A higher number of designated primitive sites would also be considered under this alternative including adjacent BLM lands outside of the lease area. Day-use fees may apply for use of these areas depending upon means of access. Large group picnic/camp sites would also be developed under this alternative with the intention of providing overflow camping during periods of high use associated with events such as FIBArk. Similar to Alternative 2, outside of these event periods the group campsites would be available for reservation as a group picnic site. As in the other alternatives, additional restrooms would be provided as well as an increase in the level of services at the site including public safety, monitoring, maintenance, and cleaning.

Management on the north side of the river would be the same as the other alternatives.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would be the No Action Alternative with no further site and/or facility development. Salida East would not be leased to CPW. The level of services, including public safety may remain the same.

Research on legal public access to the north side of the river would still be conducted. Legal access would still be pursued, but management actions would be limited to current vehicle travel regulations to provide for the protection of resources.